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ABSTRACT

This report on interstate child support cases focuses on child support enforcement problems that occur when absent parents live in states other than those in which their children reside. Findings indicate that Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and state caseload and collection data are of questionable reliability and provide limited information about interstate child support. OCSE data cannot be used to determine the relative size of states' interstate versus total caseload. OCSE data indicate that total interstate collections for fiscal year 1987 were about seven percent of total child support collections. Available caseload data show that over half of all interstate case activity is taking place in seven states. States estimate that case processing takes longer and is less successful for interstate cases sent to other states than for in-state cases. States use varying laws and processes for enforcing interstate child support. New case processing methods are tested in interstate demonstration projects. Insufficient staff, lack of automation, and differences in states' policies, procedures, and laws are identified as barriers to effective interstate enforcement. Officials cite a variety of actions, such as standardizing policies and procedures and establishing performance standards, that could improve interstate enforcement. The study instrument is appended. (RH)

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Report to Congressional Requesters

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January 1989

INTERSTATE CHILD SUPPORT

Case Data Limitations, Enforcement Problems, Views on Improvements Needed

PS 017874

GAO/HRD-89-25

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United States
General Accounting Office
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Human Resources Division

B-221078

January 27, 1989

The Honorable Thomas J. Downey
Acting Chairman, Subcommittee on
Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives

The Honorable Hank Brown
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives

In response to your May 15, 1987, request, as Acting Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation, we are presenting information on child support enforcement problems when absent parents live in states other than those in which their children reside. These are referred to as interstate child support cases. Specifically, you asked for information on

- interstate caseloads and collections;
- states' processes for locating out-of-state parents, determining paternity, establishing support orders, and making collections, including information on states' involvement in demonstration projects aimed at improving their processes; and
- states' and others' views on major barriers to effective interstate child support enforcement.

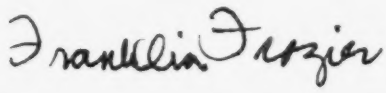
To address these concerns, we reviewed caseload and collection data, primarily from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). We also obtained views on interstate case processing methods, enforcement barriers, and needed improvements from the 54 states' and jurisdictions' child support agencies, gathered primarily through a mail questionnaire, and from knowledgeable officials of 10 national organizations through telephone interviews. In addition, we reviewed selected literature as well as information from OCSE-funded demonstration projects.

On February 23, 1988, we testified before your Subcommittee that the preliminary results of our work showed a need for better program information to assess states' performance and for better management of interstate cases. This report (see app. I) summarizes the results of our work to date. Our principal observations follow:

- OCSE and state caseload and collection data are of questionable reliability and provide limited information about interstate child support. Information to assess states' performance on interstate cases is limited because states do not separately report detailed interstate caseload and collection data. OCSE data cannot be used to determine the relative size of states' interstate versus total caseload; other available estimates range from about 18 to 30 percent. OCSE data indicated that total interstate collections for fiscal year 1987 were about $290 million, or about 7 percent of total child support collections. (See pp. 10-12.)
- Available caseload data show that over half of all interstate case activity is taking place in seven states. (See pp. 13-14.)
- States estimate that case processing takes longer and is less successful for interstate cases sent to other states than for in-state cases. (See pp. 15-16.)
- States use varying laws and processes for enforcing interstate child support. New case processing methods have been and are being tested in interstate demonstration projects. (See pp. 16-19.)
- States' and national organizations' officials identified barriers that they believe hamper effective interstate enforcement, such as insufficient staff, lack of automation, and differences in states' policies, procedures, and laws. These barriers contribute to delays in the processing of interstate cases and hamper interstate collections. The officials also cited a variety of actions that could improve interstate enforcement, such as standardizing policies and procedures and establishing performance standards. (See pp. 20-23.)

As you requested, we did not obtain formal agency comments on this report. However, we discussed our work with federal program officials and included their comments where appropriate. As agreed, unless you publicly announce the contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 10 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to other interested congressional committees and members; the Secretary of Health and Human Services; the Director, OCSE; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and cognizant officials of

the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VII.



Franklin Frazier
Associate Director

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Abbreviations

AFDC	Aid to Families With Dependent Children
FPLS	Federal Parent Locator Service
GAO	General Accounting Office
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
OCSE	Office of Child Support Enforcement
RURESA	Revised Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act
SPLS	State Parent Locator Service
UEFJA	Uniform Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act
UPA	Uniform Parentage Act
URESA	Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act

Interstate Child Support: Case Data Limitations, Enforcement Problems, Views on Improvements Needed

Background

State laws require parents to be responsible for the financial support of their children. During the 1930s and 1940s, such laws were used to establish and enforce support obligations when the absent parent, custodial parent, and child lived in the same state. But when absent parents lived out of state, enforcing child support was cumbersome and ineffective. Often the only option in such cases was to seek to extradite the absent parent and, when successful, to jail the person for nonsupport. This procedure punished the irresponsible parent, but left the abandoned family without financial support.

In 1949, efforts began in earnest to address interstate enforcement problems when 11 states enacted laws allowing child support suits filed in one state to be adjudicated in another. Then in 1950, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws[1] developed a model statute for enforcing interstate child support—referred to as the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act (URESA). The model act was amended in 1952 and 1958. In 1968, the act was substantially revised and renamed the Revised Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act (RURESA).[2] All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa have enacted similar legislation, but there are important differences among states.

In 1975 the Congress created the federal Child Support Enforcement program as title IV-D of the Social Security Act. The program's purpose is to strengthen state and local child support enforcement efforts, which include locating absent parents, establishing paternity, obtaining support orders, and collecting child support. The program is administered at the federal level by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands participate in the program.

In August 1984, concerned about weaknesses in the program and the rate of child support collections, the Congress enacted the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 (Public Law 98-378). The amendments contain provisions aimed at improving both interstate and in-state child support enforcement, including (1) mandating the use of such collection techniques as wage withholding, (2) using expedited processes under state judicial and administrative systems to establish and enforce

[1]Comprises 307 members (judges, law school deans and professors, and practicing attorneys) appointed by state governors.

[2]For the purpose of this report, this model legislation will be referred to as URESA.

child support, (3) providing incentive payments[3] to the initiating state (where the custodial family lives) and the responding state (where the absent parent lives or is thought to live) for making collections on interstate cases, and (4) providing funds for interstate child support demonstration projects.

Recent federal initiatives should have a significant effect on interstate child support enforcement. OCSE's 1988 regulations require states to establish a central registry for recording information on incoming interstate cases and responding to inquiries on such cases. The regulations also clarify case management and enforcement responsibilities of initiating and responding states. For example, responding states are required to treat interstate and in-state cases essentially the same.

The Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-485) includes several provisions affecting interstate child support enforcement. For example, the law established a Commission on Interstate Child Support to identify ways to improve interstate enforcement and revise URESA. It also requires states to establish automated statewide, comprehensive case tracking and monitoring systems, which should improve states' ability to manage interstate cases.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Citing the Congress' need for analysis of problems related to interstate child support enforcement, the Acting Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation, House Committee on Ways and Means, asked us for information on

- interstate caseloads and collections;
- states' processes for locating out-of-state parents, determining paternity, establishing support orders, and making collections, including information on states' involvement in demonstration projects aimed at improving their processes; and
- states' and others' views on major barriers to effective interstate child support enforcement.

To obtain information on interstate caseloads and collections, we reviewed data in OCSE's Twelfth Annual Report to Congress for the Period Ending September 30, 1987, and similar data reported to OCSE by

[3]Bonuses ranging from 6 to 10 percent of states' collections based on the ratio of collections to administrative costs.

the states for the 3-month period ended June 30, 1987—the latest data available at the time of our fieldwork. In August 1987 we sent a questionnaire seeking further information on caseloads, as well as processing methods and enforcement barriers, to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (tallied as "states" to simplify the presentation of our data). We received questionnaire responses from 49 states, and obtained oral responses to selected questions from the other 5. Appendix II contains aggregate state responses to the questionnaire. We did not validate the questionnaire or other state responses.

Through telephone interviews, we obtained the views of knowledgeable officials of 10 national organizations on (1) interstate enforcement barriers and (2) the actions by each level of government that would have the greatest impact on increasing collections in interstate cases. The officials' views are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of the organizations. (See app. III for a list of organizations in which we contacted officials.) In addition, we synthesized information from OCSE-funded interstate demonstration projects (see app. IV), reviewed federal law authorizing various methods of processing and enforcing interstate cases (see app. V), and reviewed selected literature on interstate enforcement (see bibliography).

Available Data Provide Limited Insight Into Extent and Effectiveness of Interstate Enforcement

Available Data of Questionable Reliability

Our work raises considerable doubt about the completeness and reliability of states' interstate case and collection data. OCSE notes in its 1987 report to the Congress that child support enforcement program reviews performed during fiscal year 1987 identified unreliable program data as a problem that hindered efficient collections. In addition, OCSE officials told us that they questioned the quality and reliability of data because states do not adequately track their cases.

Moreover, nearly half of the states responding to our questionnaire either did not provide interstate caseload data or indicated that their data on interstate cases were incomplete or unreliable. Twelve states provided no interstate caseload data. Twelve other states reported that the data they provided were unreliable. (See app. II, questions 5 to 5b, for details.)

In response to our questionnaire, 27 states provided ideas on what they think is needed to improve the reliability of data in their states. Twenty-one states told us that better automation is needed. Other comments included the need for better case tracking, better training, comprehensive statewide data bases, and an interstate clearinghouse. (See app. II, question 5c.)

Forty-three states indicated that they had further automation planned (see app. I, question 24, for examples). According to OCSE's director, states are making progress toward developing automated child support enforcement systems, but are not as far along as OCSE would like.

Extent of States' Interstate Child Support Caseloads Uncertain

OCSE data cannot be used to determine the relative size of states' interstate versus total caseloads because OCSE collects different types of information on interstate and total cases. States report all cases open at the end of each quarter, which OCSE uses to show the average annual caseload—reportedly 10.6 million for fiscal year 1987. For interstate cases, states report, on a quarterly basis, cases with requests for assistance sent to and received from other states—674,000 and 494,000, respectively, for fiscal year 1987. By definition, such data would not include open interstate cases for which no requests for assistance were made during the year. Also, since these data are reported quarterly, and then totaled for the fiscal year, the same case may be counted more than once if requests were sent or received in more than one quarter during the year.

Estimates of the relative size of interstate caseloads vary. In 1988, OCSE's associate deputy director testified before the Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation that interstate cases are about 30 percent[4] of states' total caseloads. However, information states provided to us indicates the percentage could be smaller.

[4]According to an OCSE statistician, this figure is based on a University of Michigan study in which 30 percent of 96 absent parents took up residence in a state different than the one in which their children lived. Also, OCSE's associate deputy director for information systems told us that one of the interstate demonstration projects indicated a similar percentage.

In response to our questionnaire, states' estimates of interstate cases sent and received as a percentage of their total caseloads ranged from 2 to 50 percent (see app. II, question 1). By multiplying each state's estimate by its average total caseload during fiscal year 1987, as reported to OCSE, we estimated that interstate cases totaled about 1.9 million, or 18 percent, of the total 10.6 million cases. Figure I.1 shows the ranges of states' caseload estimates.

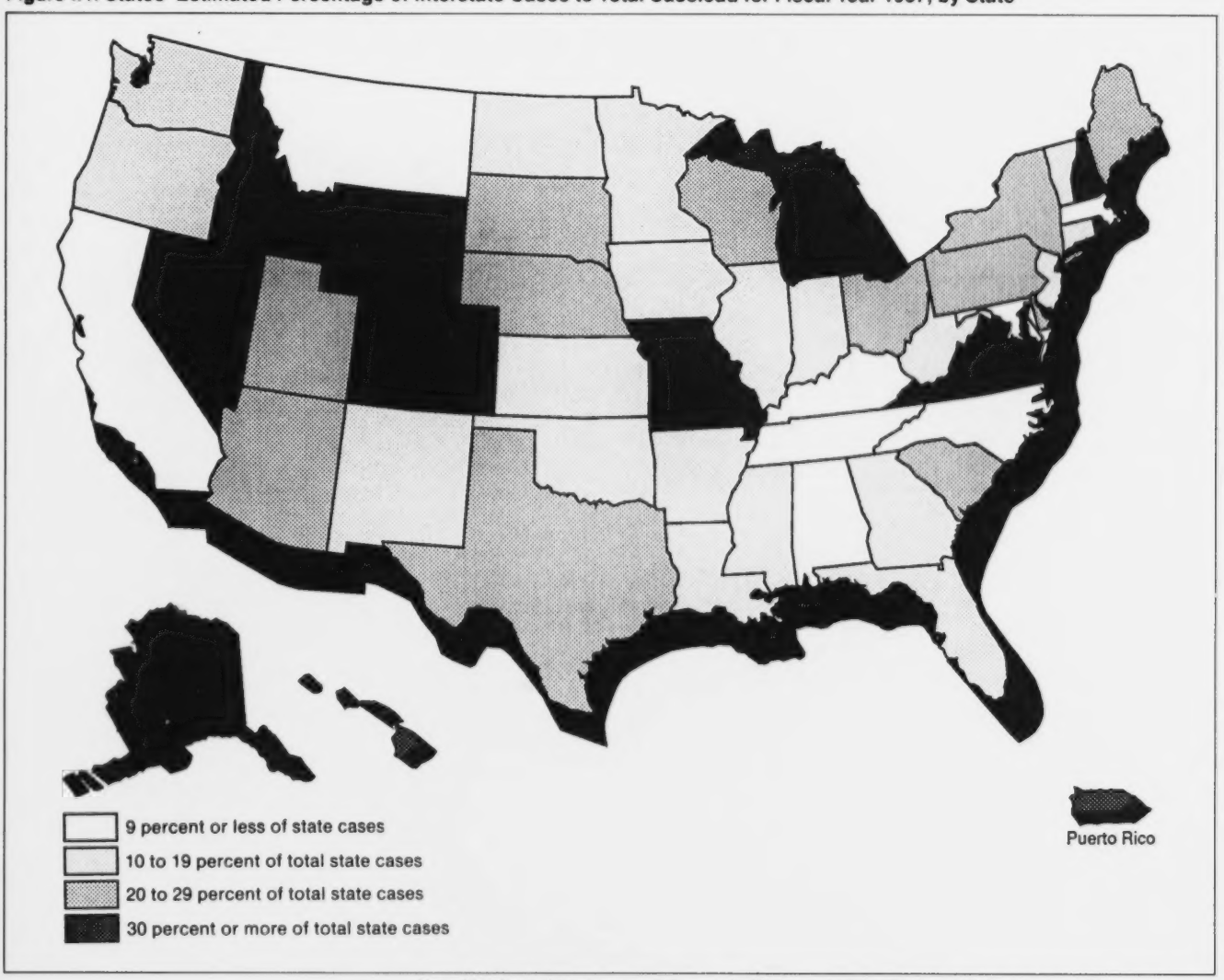
We have no basis for determining the accuracy of these caseload estimates.

OCSE Data Provide Little Information for Assessing Interstate Case Performance

OCSE data are of limited usefulness for assessing states' performance in making collections or providing other child support services on interstate cases. OCSE requires each state to report quarterly for all child support cases information on total collections broken down by such categories as wage withholding and other collection methods, average number of arrears only cases for which collections were made, and amounts of current support due and received. However, such detailed collection information is not broken out separately for interstate cases.

Similarly, OCSE requires states to report such data as the numbers of absent parents located, paternities determined, and support orders established for all child support cases, but not specifically for interstate cases.

Figure I.1: States' Estimated Percentage of Interstate Cases to Total Caseload for Fiscal Year 1987, by State


9 percent or less of state cases
10 to 19 percent of total state cases
20 to 29 percent of total state cases
30 percent or more of total state cases
Puerto Rico

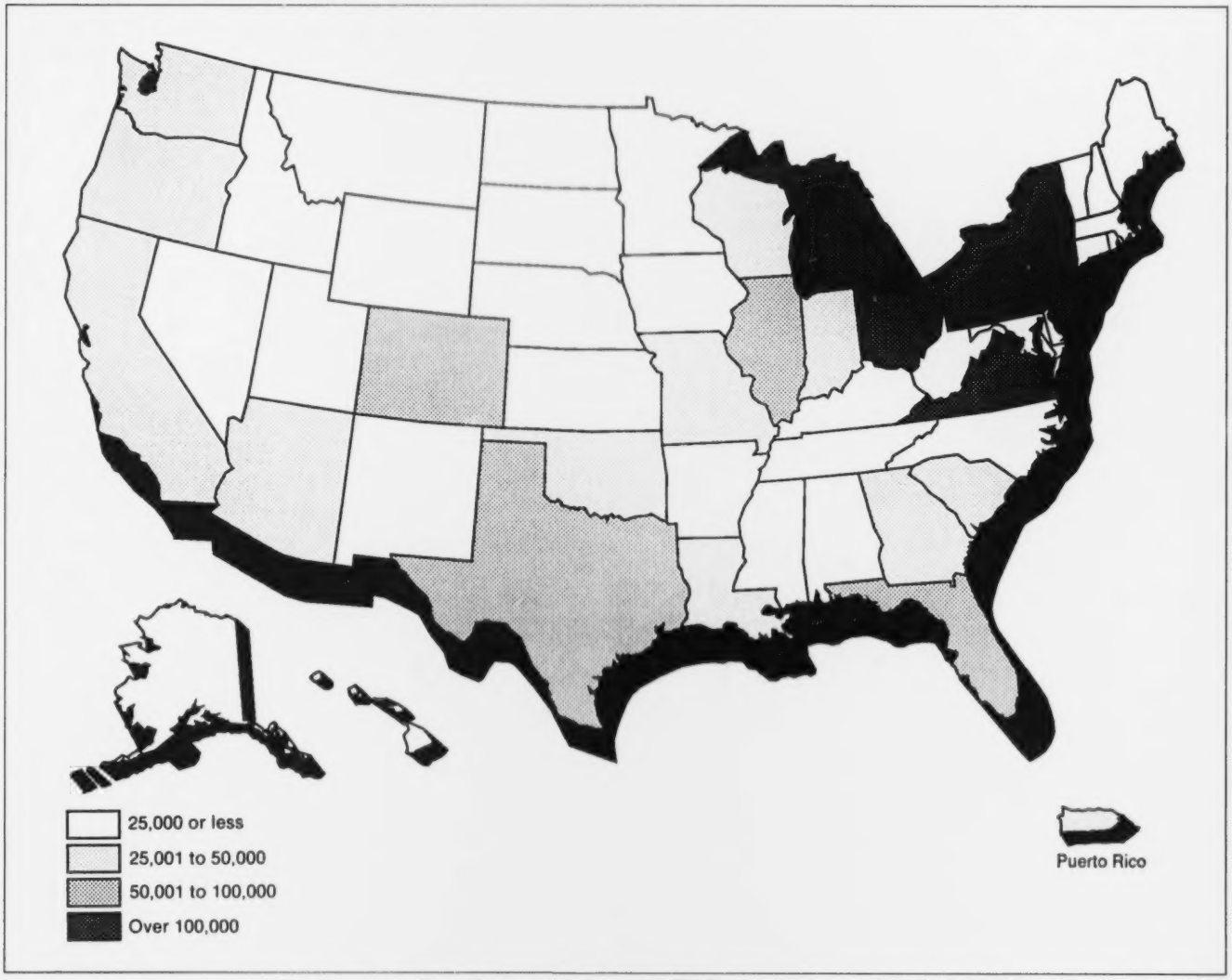
Note: Maryland did not respond. Twenty to 29 percent of the District of Columbia's and Guam's caseload consisted of interstate cases, and over 30 percent of the Virgin Islands' cases were interstate.

States With Highest Estimated Interstate Case Activity

OCSE's data and our questionnaire information indicate that most interstate case activity—cases sent and received—is concentrated in a small number of states. Seven states—Michigan, Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, and Florida—accounted for about 1.0 million, or 53

percent, of the estimated 1.9 million interstate cases discussed above. Figure I.2 shows the estimated caseload for each state.

Figure I.2: Estimated Average Open Interstate Cases for Fiscal Year 1987, by State



Note: Maryland did not respond. The District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands had fewer than 25,000 open cases in 1987.

States Estimate Slower Processing Times and Lower Success Rates for Interstate Cases

States responding to our questionnaire estimated that, for the three states to which they most frequently send cases, processing times are longer for interstate than for all cases for most child support services—paternity, support order, first collection, and ongoing collections. Interstate cases needing all services were estimated, on the average, to take 7 months longer to process, and cases needing individual services were estimated to take from 1 to 5 months longer, except for location services, which take less time. States also estimated comparatively lower success rates, on the average, for initiated interstate cases needing locate, paternity, support order, and first collection services, and about the same rates for cases needing ongoing collections and all services. This information is shown in table I.1.

As also shown in the table, the states estimated that, for the three states from which they most frequently receive cases, their processing times and success rates, for the most part, were closer to their total caseload performance. States provided no insights for their reportedly better processing times and success rates when acting as responding rather than initiating states. One explanation may be that some of the work needed to process cases is done by the initiating state before the cases are forwarded.

Table I.1: States' Estimated Processing Times and Success Rates for All Cases and Interstate Cases[a]

Type of service required	Average processing time[b] (months)			Average success rate[b] (percent of cases)		
		Interstate cases			Interstate cases	
	All cases	Initiated[c]	Responded[d]	All cases	Initiated[c]	Responded[d]
All services[e]	8	15	8	46	45	60
Location	4	5	3	63	51	64
Paternity establishment	7	12	8	55	36	53
Support order establishment	3	8	4	80	63	79
First collection	2	5	3	68	58	69
Ongoing collections	1	2	1	41	42	51

[a]Average number of months and success rates reported by individual states were averaged for all states.

[b]See appendix II, questions 11b, 22b, 27 to 38, and 47 to 58, for further details and definitions of service time frames and successful processing of services.

[c]Cases with requests for assistance sent to a state where the absent parent lives or is thought to live.

[d]Cases with requests for assistance received from a state where the custodial parent lives.

[e]Average processing times as reported by states for "all services" do not reflect the cumulative total of the individual services because some services are provided concurrently.

Processing times for both initiating and responding states may be longer, and success rates lower, when cases are handled by states that deal with each other infrequently. As discussed later, states sometimes attributed case processing delays to a lack of understanding of other states' laws and policies, and a lack of communication and cooperation between states as barriers to collections. Such factors likely would be more prevalent, and their effects more pronounced, when states are unfamiliar with each other's processes and organizations.

States' Interstate Case Processing Methods Vary: New Methods Being Tested

Forty-three states reported to us that their initiating procedures—and 16 said their responding procedures—varied depending upon the states with which they dealt (see app. II, questions 39 and 60). States told us their procedures for initiating cases were affected by such factors as varying state laws, varying state and local procedures, and priority given to interstate cases by the responding state. In addition, states' methods of pursuing interstate cases are affected by the types of child support services required after the absent parent moves to a different state than where the children live. That is, some cases require the full array of services, including establishing paternity and obtaining support orders, while others require only one service, such as ongoing collection.

States' methods for locating absent parents depend, in part, on the sources of information available. Information useful for locating parents is available from a variety of federal, state, and local sources (see app. VI for information on resources for locating absent parents).

Several demonstration projects authorized by the 1984 amendments have explored or tested various methods and ways of better identifying absent parents. For example, projects in Connecticut, Maryland, and Michigan showed that access to such data as employment and motor vehicle data is critical for locating out-of-state absent parents. A project involving four Midwest states established an automated network that allowed computerized access to one another's data bases to facilitate locating absent parents. State officials told us the network provided easy, timely access, and that they were seeking to include more states. Another project created an automated clearinghouse to help locate absent parents. (See app. IV for further information on interstate demonstration projects.)

Legal options available to the initiating state for establishing paternity, and procedures in the responding state, affect initiating states' methods

of pursuing interstate cases. When paternity must be established, initiating states generally have two legal options available—long-arm statutes and URESA.

Long-arm statutes essentially allow legal proceedings to occur in the initiating state, with notice and summons for the absent parent to appear in the initiating state's court served in the alleged father's state. Provisions of states' long-arm statutes vary from state to state and are sometimes relatively restrictive. For example, as a condition to exercise jurisdiction over an out-of-state alleged father, some states require that the child for which paternity is being sought must have been conceived in and continue to reside in the initiating state. Such limitations may preclude the use of long-arm statutes for establishing paternity. Moreover, some states do not have long-arm statutes under which paternity may be established.

The legal option most commonly used for establishing paternity is the URESA civil procedure. Through this procedure, the initiating state requests the responding state to establish paternity. However, some responding states have URESA laws that do not specifically provide for interstate paternity establishment, leaving to the responding state court's discretion as to whether paternity should be addressed.

In February 1988, an official of the American Bar Association testified before the Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation that interstate enforcement is greatly hindered by states with older versions of URESA that lack a specific provision authorizing courts to establish paternity. Some courts will not decide paternity cases unless the custodial parent appears in court. Also, if an alleged absent parent denies paternity that has not previously been established, some courts will not adjudicate the issue and will dismiss the case. (See app. V for information on legal provisions authorizing methods for enforcing child support.)

Several demonstration projects have been aimed at increasing the effectiveness of paternity establishment in interstate cases. For example, Maryland recently completed a demonstration project which recommended that states use long-arm statutes rather than URESA for establishing paternity. This is consistent with current federal regulations, which require that long-arm statutes be used to establish paternity, where applicable and appropriate. Another project in Alabama was studying the feasibility of videotaping the custodial parent's testimony

and submitting it as a substitute for the parent's personal appearance in court.

The legal options available for obtaining support orders are generally the same as those available for establishing paternity—long-arm statutes and URESA civil procedures. However, more states have long-arm statutes that can be used for obtaining support orders than for establishing paternity. In addition, methods used by initiating states for obtaining support orders may be affected by the responding state's judicial structure and procedures.

States use various methods to set payment amounts and establish support orders. Many require court hearings—the traditional judicial process. This method has been criticized in some localities because crowded court calendars lead to delays in hearing and adjudicating cases. Other jurisdictions use quasi-judicial officers—court masters, referees, or other judge substitutes—to perform support order duties normally done by judges. Finally, some jurisdictions use hearings officers to establish support orders completely outside the court system—referred to as an administrative process. Under all methods, the courts retain authority over final decisions. Many states told us that processing delays frequently were caused by judicial backlogs, and some believed their collections would increase if they could use an administrative process.

States generally have a wide variety of methods available for collecting child support, once paternity has been established and support orders obtained. However, the collection methods used are affected by the circumstances of the case. For example, without involving the responding state, the initiating state may pursue direct income withholding if it knows that the absent parent is in the military, works for the federal government, or is employed by a company doing business in the initiating state. With minimal court involvement in a responding state (unless challenged by the absent parent), a state may request interstate income withholding or registration of an existing support order which requires enforcement by the responding state as if it was originally issued by that state. (See app. V for further information.)

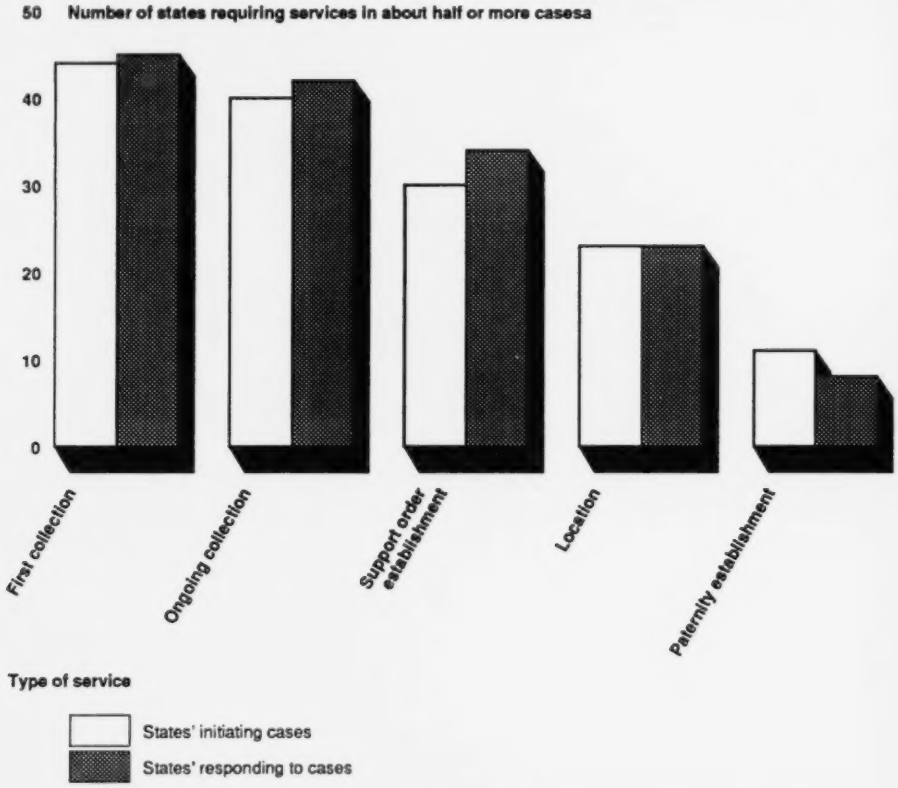
Forty-eight states indicated that the 1984 amendments' income-withholding requirement had improved their interstate collection efforts. (The Family Support Act of 1988 requires that, effective November 1990, wage withholding be automatic except under special circumstances.) To further increase their collections, some states suggested, in

their questionnaire responses, that greater use of liens against assets, state tax refund offsets, and credit bureau reporting should be made.

Demonstrations by Maryland, Connecticut, and Michigan reported that the URESA civil procedure is often used for collections although more effective, less time-consuming options, such as interstate wage withholding, are available. These demonstrations concluded that failure to use the most effective option results in case processing time lags, low support order payment amounts, and, hence, reduced collections.

In response to our questionnaire, states told us that child support cases do not always require all services (see app. I, questions 7, 25, and 45). For example, the initiating state may not request the responding states to provide locate services if information obtained from the custodial parent is believed sufficient. Similarly, paternity and support orders may already be established before the case is sent to the responding state. The frequency with which states estimate they need child support services for about half or more of their interstate cases is shown in figure I.3.

Figure I.3: States' Estimated Demand for Enforcement Services on Interstate Cases



Note: Forty-six states provided information about demand for ongoing collections; 47 states provided information about demand for other child support enforcement services.

Barriers That Hamper Interstate Collections

Our questionnaire listed 12 interstate collection barriers identified in previous studies and asked the states to indicate how much effect each barrier has on collections. Insufficient staff, lack of automation, and differing policies and procedures among states were most frequently cited by the 54 states and officials in 10 organizations we contacted as greatly affecting interstate collections. States' and the organization officials' views on which barriers greatly affect interstate collections are shown in table I.2. (See app. II, question 66, for details.)

Table I.2: Barriers Greatly Affecting States' Interstate Collections

Barriers	Number of identifying entities: States	Number of identifying entities: National organizations with officials contacted[a]
Insufficient staff for timely processing of interstate cases	43	6
Lack of automation within states	30	9
Different policies and procedures among states	30	8
Lack of streamlined procedures for processing interstate cases	26	4
Different laws among states	25	6
Lack of automated networks between states	25	4
Lack of training on the processing of interstate cases	21	6
Different forms for processing cases among states	19	3
Insufficient incentives for timely processing of interstate cases in responding states	14	2
Lack of centralization of incoming cases in responding states	13	6
Lack of federal guidance on the processing of interstate cases	11	4
Lack of centralization of outgoing cases in initiating states	8	4

[a]Officials' views do not necessarily represent the views of the 10 national organizations.

Twenty-two states identified various other barriers affecting enforcement. Examples of those barriers included

- insufficient case information provided by initiating states;
- lack of (1) communication/cooperation between states, (2) knowledge about other state's procedures, (3) uniformity in interstate forms, (4) resources for locating absent out-of-state parents, and (5) a strong state-run program;
- failure to use the most effective enforcement techniques, such as wage withholding and liens; and
- problems with the judicial system, including (1) difficulties serving summons, (2) judicial laxness and disputes, (3) court backlogs, (4) lack of trained judges, and (5) lack of expedited, nonjudicial administrative processes.

Additional examples of states' comments are listed in appendix II, question 66b.

Officials of eight national organizations also cited some similar and some additional barriers:

- Low priority given to interstate cases.
- Inadequate information from initiating states.
- High turnover of IV-D workers because of low pay and prestige.
- Lack of a national clearinghouse.
- Lack of state motivation to process interstate cases.
- Allowing states to modify other states' orders even with regard to property, custody, and visitation rights.
- Lack of title IV-D program and court interface (if courts are not tied into IV-D, there is no incentive).
- Use of URESA when other methods are more appropriate for establishing paternity, obtaining support orders, and collecting support (e.g., wage withholding).

Enforcement barriers result in delays in processing interstate cases. Questionnaire respondents most often cited the state/local IV-D agency, clerk of the court, and district/county attorney as the groups or agencies most responsible for processing delays. Reasons cited for delays by each of these groups or agencies included (1) lack of staff to handle large caseloads and backlogs, (2) lack of automation, (3) time-consuming paperwork processes, and (4) low priority given cases. Examples of additional reasons are listed in appendix II, questions 43 and 64.

Improvements Underway and Suggested for Interstate Enforcement

States told us the 1984 amendments have improved, and OCSE's recent interstate regulations should improve, interstate enforcement. Forty-eight states said the amendments' income-withholding requirement improved their ability to process cases. About half the states indicated that the amendments' provisions for incentive payments to initiating states for collections made on their behalf and federal funding for interstate demonstration projects improved interstate enforcement. (See app. II, questions 68a and b, for examples of other changes in the amendments that states believe improved interstate enforcement.)

In response to our question about the likely effect of OCSE's recent regulations on interstate enforcement, states most frequently indicated that improvements would result from requiring (1) the responding state to provide the same services for interstate as for in-state cases, (2) the responding state to have sufficient staff to process interstate cases, and (3) the initiating state to pay paternity blood test costs. (See app. II, question 70, for further detail.)

Thirty-two states also identified ongoing improvements to their interstate child support enforcement processes. Examples included

(1) strengthening state legislation, policies, and procedures; (2) increasing attention and priority given to interstate cases; (3) improving absent parent location services; (4) improving collection techniques; (5) increasing staffing/training; (6) developing or improving automated in-state systems; (7) establishing automated networks with other states; and (8) improving state data reporting systems. (Additional examples of ongoing improvements are listed in app. II, question 69.)

Fifty-three states and officials in the 10 national organizations suggested federal, state, and/or local government actions that would enhance collections. Suggested actions at the federal level included

- standardizing laws, procedures, and forms that bear on interstate cases;
- establishing an interstate computer network with uniform processing requirements for each state;
- establishing child support office performance standards for handling interstates cases;
- simplifying paternity establishment across state lines by taking such steps as requiring states to have civil remedies and long-arm statutes for establishing paternity;
- providing more funding for paternity blood tests;
- standardizing interstate wage-withholding practices;
- requiring social security numbers on birth, marriage, and divorce documents;
- increasing financial incentives for responding states;
- providing more financial support for automation; and
- establishing more explicit child support office staffing standards for handling interstate and in-state cases.

Suggested actions at the state/local level included (1) standardizing policies, procedures, and forms; (2) improving case tracking; (3) ensuring the availability of adequate child support office staff; (4) establishing better cooperation between child support agencies and the courts; (5) giving the same priority to interstate and in-state cases; (6) establishing nonjudicial, expedited processes; (7) training child support office workers on how to effectively apply enforcement methods; and (8) using videotaped testimony in paternity cases. (Additional examples of suggested actions at the federal, state, and local levels are provided in app. II, questions 67a to 67e.)

GAO Questionnaire Annotated to Show Responses of Replying States

This appendix presents the questionnaire in its entirety, as it was sent to the 54 states (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. territories) annotated to show aggregate responses. Forty-nine states responded by mail and five by telephone. The response totals for some questions do not equal the number of respondents because states either did not answer the question or skipped the question according to our questionnaire instructions.

GAO QUESTIONNAIRE ANNOTATED
TO SHOW RESPONSES OF REPLYING STATES

UNITED STATES
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Survey of Interstate

Child Support Programs

Please return
within two weeks to:

Margie K. Shields
U.S. General Accounting Office
1275 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

The Congress has asked our agency, the U.S. General Accounting Office, to survey states about the barriers to collecting child support payments from out-of-state absent parents. This questionnaire asks your views on this topic as a state both initiating interstate cases and responding to requests for assistance from other states. We hope you will help us by completing the following questionnaire as quickly as possible.

In the first set of questions we ask for data on interstate cases. In the second section we ask questions about case processing in general in your state to provide a baseline for subsequent questions on the processing of interstate cases. Next, we ask about case processing from your perspective as a state initiating interstate cases, followed by questions regarding case processing from your perspective as a state responding to interstate cases. A final set of questions relate to your overall observations of interstate enforcement.

We do not expect you to solicit additional information from counties or other substate units within your state, but please provide estimates if at all possible when exact information is unavailable. Leave a question blank only if a lack of information at the state level makes an estimate impossible.

Because different states may define some terms differently, we are providing a glossary of terms to ensure a uniform interpretation of our questions. Should you have any doubt about the meaning we have assigned to a term, please refer to this glossary at the back of the questionnaire.

After completing the questionnaire, place it in the enclosed business reply envelope and mail it. No postage is needed. If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the study, call Margie Shields in our San Francisco office, collect, at (415) 556-6200. Thank you.

Please provide the following information about yourself as the respondent to the questionnaire:

(Information not presented in this report.)

NAME _____

TITLE _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER (___) _____

Part I: INTERSTATE CASELOAD DATA

This part of the questionnaire asks you to provide the best available data on your state's interstate caseload.

A. GENERAL SIZE AND NATURE OF INTERSTATE CASELOAD

The first set of questions asks you to provide a description of the size and nature of your state's AFDC and non-AFDC interstate caseload. If exact figures are unavailable or unknown, please provide your best estimates.

1. What percentage of your state's total IV-D caseload is interstate cases? (Include both cases initiated by your state and cases received from other states.)

Range: 2 to 50 percent
Average: 18.4 percent (weighted)

2. Of your total interstate cases, what percentage is initiated by your state and what percentage is received from other states?

	Initiated by your state	Received from other states	Total interstate caseload
Range:	11 to 89	11 to 89	
Average:	53	47	100

3. Does your state's child support enforcement agency (or agencies in any jurisdiction in your state) initiate or receive non-IV-D interstate cases within their child support programs?

[27] Yes — ANSWER QUESTION 4
[25] No, [2] Don't know — SKIP TO QUESTION 5

4. Approximately how many non-IV-D interstate cases are currently open in your state . . .

	Total	No. of states responding
...initiated by your state?	15,126	12
...received from other states?	11,238	11

B. SPECIFIC DATA ON INTERSTATE CASELOAD

This next set of questions asks for more specific information on your IV-D interstate caseload.

5. How many IV-D interstate cases were open in your state on 6/30/87? (Please complete the following table using data sources available at the state level. The format of the table is similar to the format of OCSE-56 [Part I: Section A, Question 4].

Number of IV-D Interstate Cases Open on 6/30/87 (in thousands)

	States Providing Information			Other States[a]/	
	AFDC & FC Cases	Non-AFDC Cases	Subtotal	Subtotal	Total
Initiated in your state	230	174	404	365	769
Received from other states	185	176	361	326	687
TOTAL	415	350	765	691	1,456

a/For 12 states that did not provide the requested data, and 1 state that provided partial data, we estimated total open interstate cases by multiplying the states' estimated percentage of interstate cases (questions 1 and 2) times the number of total open cases as of June 30, 1987, reported to OCSE on quarterly report OCSE-56, Part I, Section A, Question 4.

5a. How were the data reported in table 5a compiled? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

[19] Statewide computerized support enforcement system

[3] Computerized reports from counties (or other sub-state units), compiled by the state

[17] Manual reports from counties (or other sub-state units), compiled by the state

[29] Estimated. (Please describe the basis for your estimate)

Bases for estimates included case sample, miscellaneous reports, and information in partially automated data systems.

5b. In your opinion, how reliable is the information provided in table 5? (CHECK ONLY ONE)

Very unreliable[a/] [2]	Unreliable [11]	Reliable [21]	Very reliable [7]	Don't know [2]
ANSWER QUESTION 5c		SKIP TO QUESTION 6		

a/Includes one state who did not provide requested caseload data.

5c. What do you think is needed to improve the reliability of data in your state? (Please comment)

(27 states commented.) Twenty-one states cited better automation. Other comments included better case tracking, better training, comprehensive statewide data bases, and an interstate clearinghouse

6. If you were unable to provide all of the data requested in table 5, please list below the names, titles, and phone numbers of the individuals we need to contact in order to obtain this information (or enclose separate listing).

NAME	TITLE	PHONE #	TYPE OF DATA
(Information not presented in this report.)			

Part II: PROCESSING CHILD SUPPORT CASES—GENERAL BACKGROUND

In this part, we ask questions about your state's child support program in general to provide a baseline for subsequent questions regarding interstate cases.

A. NATURE OF TOTAL CHILD SUPPORT CASELOAD

The following questions are to obtain information about the nature of the IV-D child support caseload in your state, including AFDC and non-AFDC, interstate and intrastate cases.

7. What portion of your state's cases require the following types of services? (PLEASE ESTIMATE BY CHECKING ONE ANSWER FOR EACH TYPE OF SERVICE)

Types of services:	All or almost all cases	More than half cases	About half the cases	Less than half cases	Very few or no cases	Don't know
Location	[9]	[12]	[9]	[20]	[0]	[0]
Paternity establishment	[2]	[5]	[8]	[31]	[2]	[2]
Support order establishment	[7]	[15]	[9]	[17]	[1]	[1]
Enforcement	[17]	[18]	[7]	[6]	[0]	[2]
Ongoing collection	[26]	[11]	[3]	[8]	[1]	[1]

8. For AFDC clients: Upon receiving a referral from a IV-A agency, are there any circumstances which might justify not formally opening a case?

[29] Yes — ANSWER QUESTION 8a & 8b

[21] No — SKIP TO QUESTION 9

8a. Please describe the circumstances under which cases would not be opened:

(30 states commented.) Circumstances described included (1) absent parent deceased, incapacitated, institutionalized, or incarcerated; (2) child over 18; (3) absent parent unknown; (4) non-jurisdiction, such as subject not residing in state, (5) adoption pending; and (6) inadequate information.

8b. Approximately what percentage of referrals do not result in opening a case?

Percent	# of States
5 or less	22
6 to 30	4
31 to 40	2

9. For non-AFDC clients: Upon receiving a written application for IV-D services from a non-AFDC client, are there any circumstances which might justify not formally opening a case?

[31] Yes — ANSWER QUESTION 9a & 9b

[19] No — SKIP TO QUESTION 10

9a. Please describe the circumstances under which cases would not be opened:

(31 states commented.) Circumstances described—in addition to those listed above for 8a—included (1) non-IV-D cases (private action case), (2) custody and visitation problems, (3) application fee not paid, (4) client has an active AFDC case, (5) client has private counsel, and (6) spousal support only.

9b. Approximately what percentage of non-AFDC applications do not result in opening a case?

Percent	# of States
5 or less	**26**
6 to 14	**2**

10. Does your state generate any reports, other than the required federal forms OCSE-34 and OCSE-56, which summarize child support caseload and collections data? (E.g. reports you may have generated for internal management or your state legislature, or which provide a county-by-county breakdown.)

[**35**] Yes — ANSWER QUESTION 10a

[**14**] No — SKIP TO SECTION B

10a. Please list those reports below and include samples of each one listed along with the completed questionnaire.

(Information not presented in this report.)

B. LENGTH OF TIME TO PROCESS TOTAL CASELOAD

The following questions are to ascertain how long it takes, on the average, to process all (AFDC and non-AFDC, interstate and intrastate) child support cases in your state based on the types of services required. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

11. For cases requiring all services:
(location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection)

From the time a case is opened, how long does it take till the first collection is made?

8
# of months

12. For cases requiring location services:

From the time a case is opened, how long does it take to obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent?

4
# of months

13. For cases requiring paternity establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located, how long does it take to establish paternity?

7
# of months

14. For cases requiring support order establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, how long does it take to establish a support order?

3
# of months

15. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, how long does it take to obtain the first collection?

2
# of months

16. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

From the time a payment is due, how long does it take to collect and distribute the payments?

1
# of months

C. SUCCESS RATE OF PROCESSING TOTAL CASELOAD

The following questions are to ascertain your state's success rate in providing required services to all (AFDC and non-AFDC, interstate and intrastate cases) child support cases. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

17. For cases requiring all types of services: (location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection)

17a. For what percentage do you successfully make at least one collection? **46** percent

17b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **60** percent

8. For cases requiring location services:

18a. For what percentage do you successfully obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent? **63** percent

18b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **73** percent

19. For cases requiring paternity establishment:

19a. Once the absent parent has been located, for what percentage do you successfully establish paternity? **55** percent

19b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **66** percent

20. For cases requiring support order establishment:

20a. Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, for what percentage do you successfully establish a support order? **80** percent

20b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **87** percent

21. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

21a. Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, for what percentage do you

successfully obtain at least one collection? **68** percent

21b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **70** percent

22. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

22a. For what percentage do you successfully make ongoing collections and distribute the payments? **41** percent

22b. What percentage do you think is reasonably attainable? **58** percent

D. AUTOMATION OF TOTAL CASELOAD

The following questions are to ascertain to what extent your state's child support enforcement program is automated.

23. Is case tracking automated in your state for AFDC and non-AFDC cases requiring each of the following types of services? (CHECK ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH TYPE OF SERVICE)

	Case tracking automated?					
	AFDC cases (CHECK ONE)			Non-AFDC cases (CHECK ONE)		
Types of services required	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Location	[24]	[27]	[0]	[22]	[29]	[0]
Paternity establishment	[23]	[28]	[0]	[20]	[31]	[0]
Support order establishment	[24]	[27]	[0]	[22]	[29]	[0]
Enforcement	[28]	[23]	[0]	[27]	[24]	[0]
Ongoing collection	[32]	[19]	[0]	[31]	[20]	[0]

23a. Does the automation described in table 23 include interstate cases, both cases your state initiates and cases received from other states? (CHECK ONLY ONE)

[29] Both initiated and received interstate cases

[4] Interstate cases initiated in your state only

[2] Interstate cases received from other states only

[2] No interstate cases

23b. In how many of your state's jurisdictions is the automation described in table 23 operational? (CHECK ONLY ONE)

[25] All

[6] Most

[6] Some

[0] Don't know

24. What further automation do you plan to implement by October 1, 1988? (Please describe)

(45 states commented.) Forty-three of the responding states said they had efforts planned either to establish overall case tracking systems or to establish automation relating to such activities as (1) networking with other states, (2) networking with county attorneys and offices within the states, (3) central registry, (4) adding non-AFDC cases to the system, (5) providing case information directly to staff, (6) absent parent location services, (7) assets and other matching, and (8) collections.

Part III: PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES INITIATED BY YOUR STATE

This part asks you to respond to questions from the perspective of a state initiating interstate cases (both AFDC and non-AFDC).

A. NATURE OF INTERSTATE CASELOAD SENT TO OTHER STATES

25. What portion of the interstate cases initiated by your state require the following types of services? (PLEASE ESTIMATE BY CHECKING ONE ANSWER FOR EACH TYPE OF SERVICE)

Types of services:	All or almost all cases	More than half cases	About half the cases	Less than half cases	Very few or no cases	Don't know
Location	[6]	[9]	[8]	[9]	[15]	[3]
Paternity establishment	[2]	[2]	[7]	[23]	[13]	[3]
Support order establishment	[7]	[13]	[10]	[16]	[1]	[3]
Enforcement	[19]	[18]	[7]	[3]	[0]	[3]
Ongoing collection	[26]	[8]	[6]	[5]	[1]	[4]

26. To which states do you send the most requests for assistance and about what percentage of your total requests are sent to each state listed? (PLEASE LIST THE TOP THREE)

RESPONDING STATE	NUMBER OF TIMES IDENTIFIED AS (1)	(2)	(3)	RANGE OF APPROX. PCT. OF REQUESTS
(1) California	12	8	5	8 - 95
(2) Florida	7	4	8	5 - 40
(3) Texas	5	6	7	5 - 30
(4) New York	2	5	0	12 - 42
(5) Oregon	1	3	2	5 - 40
(6) Maryland	1	3	1	12 - 30
(7) Washington	1	2	2	15 - 25

B. LENGTH OF TIME TO PROCESS INTERSTATE CASES SENT TO TOP THREE RESPONDING STATES

The following questions are to ascertain how long it takes to process child support cases initiated by your state and sent to each state listed in question 26. Enter the three responding states listed in question 26 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the average number of months it takes to process cases based on the types of services required, as listed in the left-hand column. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)_____	(2)_____	(3)_____
27. For cases requiring all types of services: (location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection) From the time a case is opened in your state, how long does it take till the first collection is received from the responding state?	13 mos.	16 mos.	15 mos.
28. For cases requiring location services:			

From the time a case is opened in your state, how long does it take for the responding state to obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent?

5 mos.	5 mos.	4 mos.

29. For cases requiring paternity establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located, how long does it take for the responding state to establish paternity?

11 mos.	11 mos.	14 mos.

30. For cases requiring support order establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, how long does it take for the responding state to establish a support order?

8 mos.	7 mos.	9 mos

Top Three Responding States
(from Q. 26)

(1)____ (2)____ (3)____

31. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, how long does it take to receive the first collection from the responding state?

4 mos.	4 mos.	5 mos.

32. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

From the time a payment is due, how long does it take to receive the payment from the responding state and distribute the payments?

2 mos.	2 mos.	2 mos.

C. SUCCESS RATE OF PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES SENT TO TOP THREE RESPONDING STATES

The following questions are to ascertain the success rate of receiving required services for child support cases initiated by your state and sent to each state listed in question 26. Enter the three responding states listed in question 26 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the percentage of cases for which those states successfully provide the required services as listed in the left-hand column. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
33. For cases requiring all types of services: (location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection) For what percentage do the responding states successfully make at least one collection?	46 pct.	45 pct.	45 pct.

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
34. For cases requiring location services: For what percentage do the responding states successfully obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent?	53 pct.	50 pct.	50 pct.
35. For cases requiring paternity establishment: Once the absent parent has been located, for what percentage do the responding states successfully establish paternity?	40 pct.	35 pct.	32 pct.
36. For cases requiring support order establishment:			

Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, for what percentage do the responding states successfully establish a support order?

67	64	58
pct.	pct.	pct.

37. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, for what percentage do the responding states successfully obtain at least one collection?

60	59	53
pct.	pct.	pct.

38. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

For what percentage do the responding states successfully make ongoing collections and forward payments?

43	43	39
pct.	pct.	pct.

D. PROCEDURES FOR INITIATING INTERSTATE CASES

The following questions are to ascertain how your state initiates interstate cases (AFDC and non-AFDC) sent to all other states.

39. When initiating a case in your state, how much do your procedures vary by: (CHECK ONE ANSWER FOR EACH ITEM)

	Procedures Vary			Does Not Apply
	A Great Deal	Some	Little or None	
The local jurisdiction where the case is initiated	[3]	[20]	[27]	[3]
The state to which the case is sent	[13]	[30]	[10]	---

39a. Are there other factors that cause procedures to vary that are not listed?

[20] Yes [33] No

ANSWER QUESTION 39b SKIP TO QUESTION 40

39b. What are these factors?

(20 states commented.) Factors cited included (1) varying state laws and procedures; (2) legal prohibitions on paternity establishment; (3) varying state and/or local administrative procedures; (5) varying collection procedures, such as wage withholding and garnishment; and (6) priority given to interstate cases by the responding state.

40. How are interstate cases initiated by your state processed for submission to other states? (CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER)

[10] Centrally statewide

[16] Centrally within local jurisdictions

[13] Independently by individual caseworkers

[7] Varies by local jurisdictions

[7] Other (please describe) **Descriptions generally included a combination of the above processes.**

41. Does your state use automated means of sending requests for location services to each state listed in question 26? Enter the three responding states listed in question 26 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the way you normally transmit requests for location services to each state.

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
By mail	[48]	[45]	[44]
Electronic transmission	[2]	[2]	[2]
Magnetic tape	[0]	[0]	[0]

Other means (please describe)			
One state reported a mix of telephone,	[2]	[1]	[1]
mail, and electronic transmission to each	[0]	[0]	[0]
state. Another state reported using other	[0]	[0]	[0]
means for one state, but did not elaborate			
on the procedures.			

42. Does your state use automated means of sending requests for establishment/enforcement services to each state listed in question 26? Enter the three responding states listed in question 26 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the way you normally transmit requests for establishment/enforcement services to each state.

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
By mail	[49]	[45]	[45]
Electronic transmission	[1]	[2]	[1]
Magnetic tape	[0]	[0]	[0]
Other means (please describe)			
One state reported a mix of telephone,	[1]	[1]	[1]
mail, and electronic transmission to	[0]	[0]	[0]
each state.	[0]	[0]	[0]

E. DELAYS IN PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES INITIATED BY YOUR STATE

43. If you experience delays in processing interstate cases initiated by your state, what two groups or agencies, within your state, are MOST responsible for these delays? (CHECK NO MORE THAN TWO RESPONSES)

[6] State IV-D Agency
[14] Local IV-D Agency
[1] URESA Agent
[14] Clerk of the Court
[0] Court Trustee
[1] Friend of the Court
[3] Attorney General
[7] District Attorney/County Attorney
[9] Other **(Included attorney, judge,**
[ ] Other **court system, custodial parent, state IV-A agency, and responding state.)**
[16] Not Applicable (SKIP TO QUESTION 44)

43a. Why are these two groups or agencies most responsible?

[_____]: **(30 states commented.) Examples of reasons given—in addition to those presented on page included**
grp/agy

[_____]: **(1) inexperienced attorneys processing cases, (2) time consuming legal pleadings, (3) docketing delays, and (4) time consuming process for obtaining affidavits of support paid and certified copies of decrees and support order modifications.**
grp/agy

44. If you experience delays in processing interstate cases initiated by your state, what two groups or agencies, within the three top responding states (listed in question 26) are MOST responsible for these delays? Enter the three states listed in question 26 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the two groups or agencies most responsible for any delays in each state. (CHECK NO MORE THAN TWO RESPONSES FOR EACH STATE)

	Top Three Responding States (from Q. 26)		
	(1)_____	(2)_____	(3)_____
State IV-D Agency	[8]	[3]	[8]
Local IV-D Agency	[16]	[19]	[17]
URESA Agent	[4]	[3]	[3]
Clerk of the Court	[3]	[2]	[2]
Court Trustee	[1]	[1]	[0]

Friend of the Court	[1]	[1]	[0]
Attorney General	[2]	[3]	[3]
District Attorney/County Attorney	[16]	[16]	[12]
Other (Included attorney, judge, court system, and custodial parent	5	5	5
Not Applicable	[4]	[3]	[3]

Part IV: PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES AS A RESPONDING STATE

This part asks you to respond to questions from the perspective of a state responding to cases from other states (both AFDC and non-AFDC).

A. NATURE OF INTERSTATE CASELOAD RECEIVED FROM OTHER STATES

45. What portion of your state's responding interstate cases require the following types of services? (PLEASE ESTIMATE BY CHECKING ONE ANSWER FOR EACH TYPE OF SERVICE)

Types of services:	All or almost all cases	More than half cases	About half the cases	Less than half cases	Very few or no cases	Don't know
Location	[8]	[7]	[8]	[18]	[6]	[2]
Paternity establishment	[0]	[3]	[5]	[24]	[14]	[3]
Support order establishment	[10]	[12]	[12]	[13]	[0]	[2]
Enforcement	[25]	[11]	[9]	[2]	[0]	[2]
Ongoing collection	[27]	[10]	[5]	[4]	[1]	[2]

46. From which states do you receive the most requests for assistance and about what percentage of your total requests are received from each state listed? (PLEASE LIST THE TOP THREE)

INITIATING STATE	NUMBER OF TIMES IDENTIFIED AS (1)	(2)	(3)	RANGE OF APPROX. PCT. OF REQUESTS

(1)	California	12	5	4	5 - 70
(2)	Florida	3	5	5	6 - 16
(3)	Pennsylvania	3	2	3	10 - 32
(4)	Michigan	2	2	2	4 - 11
(5)	New York	2	3	1	4 - 20
(6)	Texas	1	3	2	6 - 30
(7)	Washington	0	6	0	5 - 30

B . LENGTH OF TIME TO PROCESS INTERSTATE CASES RECEIVED FROM TOP THREE INITIATING STATES

The following questions are to ascertain how long it takes to process child support cases received by your state from each state you listed in question 46. Enter the three initiating states listed in question 46 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the average number of months it takes to process cases based on the types of services required, as listed in the left-hand column. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
47. For cases requiring all types of services: (location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection) From the time a case is opened in your state, how long does it take till the first collection is forwarded to the initiating state?	8 mos.	8 mos.	8 mos.

48. For cases requiring location services:

From the time a case is opened in your state, how long does it take for you as

the responding state to obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent?	3 mos.	3 mos.	3 mos.

49. For cases requiring paternity establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located, how long does it take for you as the responding state to establish paternity?	8 mos.	8 mos.	8 mos.

50. For cases requiring support order establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, how long does it take for you as the responding state to establish a support order?	4 mos.	4 mos.	4 mos.

Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)

(1)____ (2)____ (3)____

51. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, how long does it take for you as the responding state to make the first collection?	3 mos.	3 mos.	3 mos.

52. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

From the time a payment is due, how long does it take to collect and forward the payments to the initiating state?	2 mos.	1 mos.	1 mos.

C. SUCCESS RATE OF PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES RECEIVED FROM TOP THREE

INITIATING STATES

The following questions are to ascertain the success rate of providing required services for child support cases received by your state from each state you listed in question 46. Enter the three initiating states listed in question 46 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the percentage of cases for which you successfully provide the required services, as listed in the left-hand column. If exact figures are not available, please estimate.

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
53. For cases requiring all types of services: (location, paternity establishment, support order establishment, enforcement, and collection) For what percentage do you as the responding state successfully make at least one collection?	60 pct.	62 pct.	59 pct.

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
54. For cases requiring location services: For what percentage do you as the responding state successfully obtain a current, verifiable address of an absent parent?	64 pct.	63 pct.	64 pct.
55. For cases requiring paternity establishment: Once the absent parent has been located, for what percentage do you as the responding state successfully establish paternity?	53 pct.	53 pct.	52 pct.

56. For cases requiring support order establishment:

Once the absent parent has been located and paternity established, for what percentage do you as the responding state successfully establish a support order?

80	79	79
pct.	pct.	pct.

57. For cases requiring enforcement of a support order:

Once the absent parent has been located, paternity established, and a support order established, for what percentage do you as the responding state successfully obtain at least one collection?

70	69	68
pct.	pct.	pct.

58. For cases requiring ongoing collection of support payments:

For what percentage do you as the responding state successfully make ongoing collections and forward payments to the initiating state?

52	52	50
pct.	pct.	pct.

D. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO INTERSTATE CASES

The following questions are to ascertain how your state responds to interstate cases (AFDC and non-AFDC) received from all other states.

59. Upon receiving an interstate request, are there any circumstances which might justify not formally opening a case?

[36] Yes — ANSWER QUESTION 59a

[15] No — SKIP TO QUESTION 60

59a. Please describe the circumstances under which cases would not be opened:

(36 states commented.) Circumstances reported are similar to those reported for question 8a.

59b. Approximately what percentage of interstate requests do not result in opening a case?

4 %

60. When responding to interstate cases in your state, how much do your procedures vary by: (CHECK ONE ANSWER FOR EACH ITEM)

	Procedures Vary			Does Not Apply
	A Great Deal	Some	Little or None	
The state where the case is initiated	[4]	[12]	[34]	---
The local jurisdiction receiving the case	[5]	[21]	[23]	[2]

60a. Are there other factors that cause your procedures to vary that are not listed?

[4] Yes → ANSWER QUESTION 60b

[46] No → SKIP TO QUESTION 61

60b. What are these factors?

(4 states commented.) Factors cited included (1) different forms and procedures used by initiating states; (2) variances in emancipation age and statutes of limitations among states; and (3) some states not

enforcing arrears.

61. How are interstate cases sent to your state processed within your state? (CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER)

[22] Centrally statewide

[12] Centrally within local jurisdictions

[1] Independently by individual caseworkers

[6] Varies by local jurisdictions

[10] Other (please describe) **Descriptions generally included a combination of the above processes.**

62. Does your state use automated means of receiving requests for location services from each state listed in question 46? Enter the three initiating states listed in question 46 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the way you normally receive requests for location services from each state.

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)_____	(2)_____	(3)_____
By mail	[44]	[44]	[41]
Electronic transmission	[2]	[1]	[2]
Magnetic tape	[0]	[0]	[0]
Other means (please describe)			
One state reported a mix of telephone,	[1]	[1]	[2]
mail, and electronic transmission from	[0]	[0]	[0]
each state. Another state reported	[0]	[0]	[0]

receiving requests by telephone from one state.

63. Does your state use automated means of receiving requests for establishment/enforcement services from each state listed in question 46? Enter the three initiating states listed in question 46 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the way you normally receive requests for establishment/enforcement services from each state.

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)____	(2)____	(3)____
By mail	[43]	[43]	[42]
Electronic transmission	[2]	[1]	[1]
Magnetic tape	[0]	[0]	[0]
Other means (please describe)			
One state reported a mix of telephone,	[2]	[2]	[1]
mail, and electronic transmission from	[0]	[0]	[0]
each state. Another state reported	[0]	[0]	[0]
receiving requests by a mix of telephone,			
and mail from two states.			

E. DELAYS IN PROCESSING INTERSTATE CASES FROM OTHER STATES

64. If you experience delays in processing interstate cases as the responding state, what two groups or agencies, within your state, are MOST responsible for these delays? (CHECK NO MORE THAN TWO RESPONSES)

[7] State IV-D Agency
[15] Local IV-D Agency

[2] URESA Agent
[12] Clerk of the Court
[1] Court Trustee
[1] Friend of the Court
[4] Attorney General
[16] District Attorney/County Attorney
[9] Other (Included attorney, judge,
[0] Other family court commissioner,
and initiating state.)
[13] Not Applicable (SKIP TO QUESTION 44)

64a. Why are these two groups or agencies most responsible?

[_____]: (35 states commented.) Examples of reasons
grp/agy
given—in addition to those listed on page
[_____]:
grp/agy —include (1) court scheduling delays, (2)
time consuming process of issuing petitions and
other legal work, (3) inadequately trained staff,
(4) non-compliance of dependent, (5) time consuming
registration of orders under URESA, and (6) imple-
mentation of interstate wage withholding.

65. If you experience delays in processing interstate cases as the responding state, what two groups or agencies, within the three top initiating states (listed in question 46) are MOST responsible for these delays? Enter the three states listed in question 46 as headings in the grid below, then indicate the two groups or agencies most responsible for any delays in each state. (CHECK NO MORE THAN TWO RESPONSES FOR EACH STATE)

	Top Three Initiating States (from Q. 46)		
	(1)_____	(2)_____	(3)_____
State IV-D Agency	[7]	[8]	[7]
Local IV-D Agency	[15]	[14]	[15]
URESA Agent	[1]	[3]	[2]

Clerk of the Court	[6]	[5]	[6]
Court Trustee	[1]	[0]	[0]
Friend of the Court	[0]	[0]	[1]
Attorney General	[1]	[3]	[1]
District Attorney/County Attorney	[10]	[9]	[7]
Other (Attorney and child support	2	2	2
Other office.)	0	0	0
Not Applicable	[13]	[12]	[12]

Part V: OVERALL SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS ON INTERSTATE ENFORCEMENT

This part asks for your views on barriers to interstate child support enforcement and proposals to improve interstate child support enforcement nationwide.

66. Previous studies have cited several barriers to collecting child support payments from out-of-state absent parents. In your opinion, how much effect do the following barriers have on collecting support for interstate cases? (CHECK ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH BARRIER)

Barriers	Great effect	Moderate effect	Little or no effect	Don't know
Different laws among states	[25]	[25]	[4]	[0]
Different policies and procedures among states	[30]	[20]	[4]	[0]
Different forms for processing cases among states	[19]	[23]	[12]	[0]
Lack of centralization of outgoing cases in initiating states	[8]	[16]	[27]	[3]
Lack of centralization of incoming cases in responding states	[13]	[17]	[21]	[3]
Lack of automation within states	[30]	[16]	[7]	[1]

Lack of automated networks between states	[25]	[18]	[8]	[3]
Insufficient incentives for timely processing of interstate cases in responding states	[14]	[21]	[15]	[4]
Insufficient staff for timely processing of interstate cases	[43]	[9]	[0]	[2]
Lack of training on the processing of interstate cases	[21]	[26]	[4]	[3]
Lack of federal guidance on the processing of interstate cases	[11]	[26]	[15]	[2]
Lack of streamlined procedures for processing interstate cases	[26]	[21]	[7]	[0]

66a. Are you aware of other barriers to effective interstate enforcement not listed above?

[21] Yes → ANSWER QUESTION 66b

[32] No → SKIP TO QUESTION 67

66b. Please list these other barriers and indicate their effect on collecting support for interstate cases. (CHECK ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH BARRIER LISTED)

Barriers	Great effect	Moderate effect	Little or no effect	Don't know
(22 states commented.)	[21]	[1]	[0]	[0]
	[11]	[11]	[0]	[0]
	[4]	[2]	[0]	[0]

Examples of states' comments, in addition to those listed on page__, included (1) lack of cooperation between states on paternity issues, (2) lack of funds for blood testing in determining paternity, (3) requirement to register orders in responding state, and (4) failure of other state to respond to inquiry.

67. Tell us briefly, in your opinion, what actions (if any) by each level of government would have the greatest impact on increasing collections in interstate cases.

67a. At the federal level:

(51 states commented.) Examples of suggested actions—in addition to those listed on page —included (1) enforce state compliance with federal laws and regulations; (2) include interstate areas in audit coverage; (3) require timely enforcement, including sanctions against states; (4) provide financial incentives for paternity establishment by responding states, and (6) require establishment of long-arm statute.

67b. At the state level--by initiating states:

(45 states commented.)

67c. At the state level--by responding states:

(45 states commented.)

67d. At the local level--by initiating jurisdictions:

(41 states commented.)

67e. At the local level--by responding jurisdictions:

(41 states commented.)

Examples of suggested actions at the state/local levels—in addition to those listed on page —included (1) providing accurate and complete information when initiating cases, (2) performing quality reviews, (3) establishing a strong state-run program, (4) guaranteeing prompt hear ing of cases, and (5) making more use of wage withholding.

68. The 1984 Child Support Enforcement Amendments required changes in states' child support enforcement programs. Did the following changes improve your state's ability to process interstate cases? (CHECK ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH CHANGE)

	Improve Interstate Enforcement?		
Changes	Yes	No	Don't know
Incentive payments for making collections for other states	[26]	[16]	[11]
Provisions for income withholding	[48]	[5]	[1]
Funding for interstate demonstration projects	[21]	[20]	[13]

68a. Are you aware of other changes in the 1984 amendments which improved your state's ability to process interstate cases?

[15] Yes [37] No

ANSWER QUESTION 68b	SKIP TO QUESTION 69

68b. Please describe these other changes in the amendments.

(15 states commented.) Changes cited included (1) expedited services, (2) liens on real and personal property, (3) making information available regarding delinquent accounts to consumer reporting agencies, (4) state tax refund offsets, and (5) federal penalties for noncompliance.

69. Are any efforts underway in your state to improve interstate enforcement other than the federally funded demonstration projects?

[32] Yes	[22] No
ANSWER QUESTION 69a	SKIP TO QUESTION 70

69a. Please describe these efforts briefly. Enclose any relevant material you think may be helpful.

(32 states commented.) Examples of efforts described—in addition to those listed on page —included (1) requiring enforcement of orders from initiating states, (2) improving monitoring of interstate cases, (3) increasing the number of interstate paternities established on interstate cases, (4) improving in-state communication, and (5) centralizing URESA administration.

70. OCSE's draft interstate regulations (OCSE-AT-86-20) propose the following solutions to interstate problems. Based on your state's interactions with other states throughout the nation, in your opinion, are these solutions likely to improve interstate enforcement nationwide? Has your state already implemented these proposals?

	Likely to Improve Interstate Enforcement? (CHECK ONE)			Already Implemented? (CHECK ONE)		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Requiring the initiating state to:						
Increase use of long-arm statute to establish paternity	[36]	[6]	[8]	[36]	[10]	[4]
Provide additional information requested by responding state within 30 days	[39]	[6]	[5]	[23]	[19]	[8]
Notify responding state of any changes in case status within 10 days	[33]	[13]	[4]	[9]	[34]	[7]
Pay for the costs of blood tests for paternity establishment	[46]	[2]	[2]	[27]	[19]	[3]
Requiring the responding state to:						
Establish a central registry to receive and control incoming interstate cases	[38]	[7]	[5]	[27]	[21]	[1]
Ensure the central registry forwards cases for processing within 10 days	[39]	[8]	[3]	[21]	[24]	[1]
Ensure the central registry maintains case records and reviews the status of cases every 90 days[a]	[33]	[11]	[6]	[11]	[34]	[3]
Provide sufficient staff to process interstate cases	[48]	[0]	[1]	[16]	[29]	[3]
Process cases to the extent possible with available information	[40]	[6]	[4]	[34]	[10]	[5]
Provide same services for interstate						

cases as for intrastate cases	[48]	[2]	[0]	[46]	[3]	[0]

[a]This provision was revised in the final regulations issued February 22, 1988. The responding state's IV-D agency, not the central registry, was made responsible for insuring the maintenance of case records and periodic reviews. The initiating state's IV-D agency was made responsible for contacting the responding state for a status update on cases not in payment status if 90 days had elapsed since the last contact with the responding state.

(70. CONTINUED)

	Likely to Improve Interstate Enforcement? (CHECK ONE)			Already Implemented? (CHECK ONE)		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Requiring the responding state to:						
Provide initiating state with timely notice of hearings	[32]	[13]	[5]	[22]	[18]	[9]
Notify the initiating state of changes in case status within 10 days	[30]	[16]	[4]	[10]	[32]	[6]
Pay for case processing (except for blood tests)	[23]	[14]	[12]	[25]	[16]	[7]
Attempt to obtain judgment for blood tests from absent parent and reimburse initiating state	[34]	[9]	[7]	[32]	[8]	[7]
Identify any fees or costs deducted from collections on non-AFDC cases	[21]	[17]	[10]	[15]	[25]	[4]
Forward collections within 10 days of receipt	[40]	[4]	[6]	[30]	[13]	[5]
Provide more detailed information to initiating state identifying the cases to which collections apply	[36]	[8]	[6]	[24]	[15]	[9]]

71. Please take this opportunity to make any comments you wish to bring to the attention of GAO and Congress regarding the processing of interstate cases.

(20 states commented.) States' comments included the following.

— OCSE should develop an evaluation instrument to report on the performance of all states in interstate enforcement.

— So long as URESA and other mechanisms are saddled with archaic requirements and concepts, interstate cases will be more difficult, more expensive, and more time consuming than intrastate cases.

— Higher federal financial participation in program costs would allow states to hire appropriate staff. Until this is done, interstate collections will continue with little or no change.

— Better automation will significantly improve the overall work of title IV-D agencies.

— The greatest assistance to processing interstate cases would be the requirement that all cases have social security numbers. This one piece of information determines the overall success of any attempt to locate, establish, and enforce child support obligations nationwide.

THANK YOU! PLEASE CHECK TO SEE THAT ALL ITEMS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MAIL THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE BUSINESS REPLY ENVELOPE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

National Organizations in Which Officials Were Contacted

To obtain perspectives on interstate problems, we contacted officials from 10 national organizations:

American Bar Association.

Center for the Support of Children.

Children's Defense Fund.

National Center for State Courts.

National Child Support Enforcement Association.

National Conference of State Legislatures.

National Council for Children's Rights.

National Governors' Association.

National Institute for Child Support Enforcement.

Women's Legal Defense Fund.

Overview of Interstate Child Support Enforcement Demonstration Projects as of August 1988

To encourage more effective methods of interstate enforcement, the 1984 amendments authorized funds for grants to demonstrate and test new or innovative methods of interstate child support collection. In fiscal years 1985-87, OCSE had provided over $21 million for 19 such projects. No additional funds were provided in fiscal year 1988. The projects explored automated interstate networks and data exchanges, improved management of interstate case processing, and such other interstate issues as problems in paternity establishment and increased use of credit reporting agencies. This appendix provides information on each project, including the lead and (in parentheses) participating states, funding, goals, results, and status as of August 1988, according to project officers and directors.

Automated Interstate Networks and Data Exchanges

States	Alaska (Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington)
Funding	$1,476,323
Project Period	June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1989
Goals	To establish common data elements and an automated system for processing interstate cases.
Results	The system, building on the existing state systems, became operational in all five states in October 1987. The involved states defined standard functions and data requirements, and designed their system to include all the services needed to process interstate cases.

States	Iowa (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma)
Funding	$1,476,487
Project Period	July 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1989
Goal	To develop and demonstrate an automated system for locating out-of-state absent parents and implementing various enforcement remedies.
Results	The network, based on on-line inquiries to other states' data bases, was being used for parent locator activities in four of the five states. They had also exchanged tapes with states outside the region (Illinois and Texas). One state had not finished its in-state automated system, which is needed to be able to use the network.

States	Illinois (Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin)
Funding	$2,897,166
Project Period	June 1, 1985, to Sept. 30, 1988 (extension requested)
Goals	To create and test (1) an automated clearinghouse for locating out-of-state absent parents and (2) an automated case expediting and tracking system.
Results	The project created a central clearinghouse that compiled an automated listing of each participating state's out-of-state absent parents. For each

state, the clearinghouse attempts to locate absent parents by making inquiries to the states' various data bases. The project also created and implemented an automated system in Illinois to expedite and track delinquent cases, and it was working on implementing such a system in the other participating states.

States	South Carolina (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee)
Funding	$4,150,258
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1988
Goal	To develop a central data base for the participating states that includes "parent-locate" data from various sources in each state and to provide each state with on-line access to the central data base to assist in location of absent parents and records transfer. Also, to demonstrate and evaluate the system.
Results	The project compiled data from all eight states, but some state agencies were reluctant to cooperate. A contractor was preparing a cost-benefit analysis of the project.

States	Massachusetts (Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont)
Funding	$262,014

Project Period	June 1, 1985, to May 31, 1987
Goals	To develop a regional interstate directory setting forth such information as the procedures, techniques, and contacts for processing cases within each of the six participating states. Also, to develop standardized case processing procedures and forms and a model legislative package and to study the feasibility of an automated network.
Results	The regional directory was developed and distributed nationwide, and the New England states informally agreed to greater standardization of procedures. However, the project period ended before the directory's impact was evaluated or any other project goals were realized.

States	Delaware (Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania)
Funding	Two grants totaling $230,153
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Mar. 31, 1989
Goals	To (1) increase the use of non-URESA methods of establishing and enforcing child support, (2) implement a process for determining the most appropriate action on a case-by-case basis, and (3) establish paternity and support obligations and use enforcement techniques in a more timely manner.
Results	In February 1987, the grantee issued an evaluation of enforcement remedies, concluding that several alternatives to URESA should be used when appropriate and that more uniformity among states and more staff training were needed. Delaware was continuing work with the participating states to examine alternative remedies to URESA.

States	New Jersey (Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania)
Funding	$529,339
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Sept. 30, 1988
Goal	To exchange data tapes for locating out-of-state absent parents and providing information on wages, unemployment insurance benefits, and state income tax refunds that are available for child support.
Results	The participating states exchanged data tapes and expect to continue tape exchanges after federal funding for the project ends.

States	New Hampshire (Maine)
Funding	$3,916,930
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1986, to Feb. 28, 1989
Goal	To (1) develop a comprehensive data processing system for child support enforcement activities, transferable to other states, and (2) demonstrate banking techniques, such as direct deposit, lockbox, and electronic funds transfer.
Results	System programming was expected to be completed by November 1988, with full conversion and contract completion scheduled for February 1989.

States	Iowa (Nebraska)
Funding	$1,345,455
Project Period	Jan. 1, 1987, to Mar. 31, 1989
Goal	Develop a system for electronically transferring interstate child support payments among the participating states to increase the efficiency and reduce the costs of making interstate collections.
Results	The project produced a manual on applications of electronic funds transfer of child support payments, and it was developing several options presented in the manual.

States	Kentucky (Ohio)
Funding	$442,336
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to May 1, 1987
Goals	To research interstate child support enforcement problems in the Cincinnati, Ohio/Covington and Newport, Kentucky, metropolitan area, and demonstrate the effectiveness of using a private sector style collection system for interstate cases.
Results	Efforts resulted in implementing a computer information system for URESA cases in the metropolitan area. The project found consistent, long

delays and low collection rates in URESA cases, and it developed strategies to increase collections. Continued funding to test and implement the strategies was not approved.

States	District of Columbia (Maryland)
Funding	$536,890
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1986
Goals	To assess interstate case processing needs in the Washington metropolitan area and to test the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of a central unit for facilitating and coordinating interstate activities.
Results	The project identified a strong need for networking a case tracking system with neighboring jurisdictions. Continued funding to establish an interjurisdictional network was not approved.

Improved Management of Interstate Case Processing Within States

State	Maryland
Funding	$455,944

Project Period	June 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1986
Goals	To analyze interstate child support enforcement operations and problems and to develop and test improvements.
Results	Efforts, summarized in a report, resulted in recommendations that Maryland (1) work more closely with other states and obtain access to out-of-state data bases; (2) improve interstate case tracking and monitoring with automation; (3) consolidate agencies, units, and functions; (4) link locate services with other case processing needs; (5) use long-arm statutes to establish paternity; and (6) increase use of registration, income withholding, and military allotments. Continued funding to implement these recommendations was not approved.

State	Connecticut
Funding	Two grants totaling $642,328
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Sept. 29, 1988 (extension to Apr. 30, 1989, requested)
Goals	To analyze current interstate child support enforcement operations and problems and to develop and test improvements with respect to service of process on absent parents, selection of case processing methods best suited to a given case, and use of credit reporting agencies to gain leverage over delinquent absent parents.
Results	Project efforts, summarized in a report, identified problems in the quality of data from initiating states, paternity establishment, and income withholding for interstate cases. Also, reliance on the URESA civil procedure without up-front case analysis and assessment of alternatives was identified as a contributing factor to low support order amounts. Efforts to develop and test improvements were funded under a separate grant.

State	Michigan
Funding	$534,250
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Mar. 31, 1987
Goal	To assess interstate case processing and identify innovations in staffing, training, and interstate coordination to maximize collections.
Results	Project efforts, summarized in a report issued in March 1988, identified problems with URESA and underutilization of other methods of enforcement. Continued funding to test hypotheses and develop solutions was not approved.

State	Colorado
Funding	$368,952
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1987
Goal	To develop, implement, and evaluate a statewide interstate child support enforcement process.
Results	Project efforts resulted in establishing a statewide clearinghouse for all incoming and outgoing interstate cases and standardized procedures for the outgoing cases. Continued funding to implement innovations was not approved.

Special Studies of Interstate Issues

State	Texas
Funding	$1,137,861
Project Period	Apr. 1, 1986, to Apr. 30, 1988
Goals	To develop migration tables for out-of-state absent parents and improved blood-type tables for determining the paternity of Hispanics and blacks.
Results	Migration tables were completed and issued in February 1987. The final report was sent to OCSE for review in August 1988.

State	Puerto Rico (Virgin Islands)
Funding	$337,128
Project Period	Oct. 1, 1985, to Mar. 31, 1988
Goal	To improve statistical tables for paternity blood tests of Puerto Ricans and Virgin Islanders.
Results	The final report was being written.

States	Alabama (Delaware and Georgia)
Funding	$300,935
Project Period	June 1, 1985, to Mar. 31, 1988
Goal	To improve paternity establishment in URESA cases by videotaping courtroom testimony and using standardized forms, procedures, and laboratory testing.
Results	Standardized forms were developed and distributed to the states. Efforts to develop procedures for blood tests and to examine use of videotaped testimony were undertaken. The final report was expected in September 1988.

State	Indiana
Funding	$359,090
Project Period	Sept. 30, 1987, to Apr. 30, 1989
Goal	To (1) obtain enforcement leverage over delinquent, absent parents by providing child support payment and arrearage information to credit reporting agencies and (2) acquire absent parent location information from such agencies in cases with and without support obligations.
Results	Testing of methods with credit bureaus was underway.

Brief Description of Various Legal Provisions for Enforcing Interstate Child Support

This appendix discusses the legal basis for various means of enforcing interstate child support. The methods discussed are not mutually exclusive, and depending on the circumstances of the case, each may be important in designing a strategy for collecting support from an absent parent.

Mechanisms Involving Initiating and Responding States

The following mechanisms require involvement of two states to establish and/or enforce a child support order for an out-of-state parent.

Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act

URESA[1] is a model act providing a means for establishing paternity and establishing and enforcing child support orders across state lines whereby actions initiated in one state are processed in another. All states have adopted such an act in some form, but there are important differences among states. For example, some states' versions of the act do not specifically provide for paternity establishment. The states' acts generally provide three mechanisms for processing interstate actions, as discussed below.

The principal provisions of URESA provide for civil enforcement of interstate child support. All states have adopted some civil procedures. Typically, the custodial parent files a petition in his or her state which is then forwarded to a court in the responding state, where the absent parent is believed to reside. The responding state notifies the absent parent, arranges a hearing, and usually provides legal representation for the custodial parent whether or not he or she travels to the responding state.

Civil enforcement under URESA may be used to establish paternity and support orders, as well as enforce existing support orders. However, even if there is an existing support order, the responding state establishes a new order, which may differ from the existing order. In this regard, differences in states' laws affect case settlements. For example, while most states require parents to support their child until age 18, at least one state requires parents to provide support until a child is 21 years old, and some states extend the duty of support under various

[1]URESA was revised in 1968 and became the revised Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act. For simplification, both models are referred to as URESA.

circumstances. Also, some state courts do not have jurisdiction to adjudicate paternity under URESA and will not conduct a URESA hearing, if the absent alleged parent denies paternity, until paternity has been determined through a different proceeding.

Registration

Under URESA provisions adopted by 36 states, an existing support order issued in one state may be legally certified (registered) and enforced in a responding state and no new order need be established. Upon receiving a registration request, the responding state must notify the absent parent, who generally has 20 days to request a hearing for challenging enforcement of the order. If the court rules against a challenge or if no hearing is requested, the court registers the order, which then has the same effect as any other support order issued by the registering state.

Extradition

Extradition provisions authorize the governor of an initiating state to demand that a responding state extradite any person charged criminally with failing to provide support and to respond to similar demands from other initiating states. Before making a demand or responding to one, the governor may require satisfaction that a civil enforcement action has been initiated or that such an action would be of no use.

Extradition is usually the last URESA method resorted to, in part because of difficulty proving that a defendant intentionally or willfully refused to pay support.

Uniform Enforcement of Foreign Judgment Act (UEFJA)

Thirty states have enacted UEFJA in some form. UEFJA provides that, upon the filing of an authenticated foreign (i.e., out-of-state) judgment and notice to the judgment debtor, the judgment will be treated in the same manner as a local one. This method can be used only to enforce a final child support order that is not subject to modification.

Interstate Income Withholding

Federal law requires states to authorize a means for withholding pay from the income of parents who owe child support even if such amounts are owed pursuant to a support order issued in another state.[2] Withholding is to begin without amending the support order or further court

[2]42 U.S.C. 666(b)(9).

action, and it applies to all new and existing cases that are 1 month delinquent in payments.[3]

To comply with interstate income withholding requirements, states have enacted various statutes. Some states, such as California, New York, Colorado, Tennessee, and Georgia, require registration of a child support order under URESA or domestication (establishment of a new order within the state) of an out-of-state order before they will enforce an interstate request for income withholding. There is no federal ruling to date as to whether such statutes comply with federal requirements.

To help states meet federal requirements and improve interstate enforcement, in 1982 OCSE requested the American Bar Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures to develop a model interstate income withholding statute. The model act was published in November 1984, and 10 states have adopted it.

Mechanisms Allowing for Direct Enforcement of Interstate Cases

The following mechanisms are those that allow the custodial parent's state to pursue enforcement of an interstate case without involving the responding state.

Long-Arm Statutes

Long-arm statutes, which take a variety of forms, are state laws enabling a state to exercise jurisdiction over a person outside the state under certain conditions, provided that the person's right to due process is protected.[4] Many states have long-arm statutes that can be used to establish support orders for out-of-state absent parents. Examples of such long-arm statutes include the following: (1) a specific domestic relations long-arm statute, which may be used if the couple had been

[3]The Family Support Act of 1988 requires immediate withholding, with few exceptions, beginning November 1990.

[4]The due process clause of the 14th Amendment limits a state's jurisdiction over persons not in the state, to persons that have "minimum contacts with [the state attempting to assert jurisdiction] such that the maintenance of the suit does not offend 'traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.'" (International Shoe Co. v. Washington, 326 U.S. 310, 316 (1945) quoting Milliken v. Meyer, 311 U.S. 457, 463 (1940).) This constitutes the principal obstacle preventing parents from simply filing a child support claim against an absent parent in a state court where the custodial parent resides. The Supreme Court has never articulated a precise description or comprehensive list of circumstances under which a state's exercise of jurisdiction under a long-arm statute will not violate the 14th Amendment.

married in the state, and (2) a general long-arm statute, which may be used if the couple transacted any business within the state, such as a separation agreement, or if the absent parent caused injury, such as failure to provide support. Use of long-arm statutes often results in establishment of a default judgment because the out-of-state parent does not appear in court.

States less frequently have long-arm statutes that can be used to establish paternity. Usually such statutes require conception within the state and the continuing residence of the child and/or custodial parent within the state. Sixteen states have adopted some form of the Uniform Parentage Act—model legislation that includes a special long-arm provision to establish paternity and determine the amount of child support payments for out-of-state absent parents.

Direct Income Withholding

This mechanism can be used in those cases when a support order has already been established and the state can obtain jurisdiction over the out-of-state absent parent's employer without involving another state. Such situations exist when the absent parent's employer is (1) the military, (2) the federal government, or (3) a company doing business in both states.

Members of the uniformed services on active duty are subject to mandatory allotments from their pay and allowances. They may be required to make such allotments in any case in which child support payments are delinquent in an amount equal to the support payable for 2 months or longer.[5] Such allotments can be arranged without involvement of the state where the absent parent resides by following the procedures promulgated by the Department of Defense.[6] Federal employees are subject to similar withholding procedures as promulgated by the various departments.[7]

When the absent parent is employed by a company doing business within the initiating state, the state can serve an income withholding order on the employer within the state even though the absent parent is working in a branch outside the state. This is sometimes regarded as a form of long-arm statute.

[5]42 U.S.C. 665.

[6]32 C.F.R. Part 54.

[7]42 U.S.C. 659 and 661.

Federal Tax Refunds

Federal law permits states to arrange the seizure of federal tax refunds of individuals who owe overdue child support.[8] OCSE has outlined circumstances under which past due support will qualify for such offsets.[9] This method permits collection of overdue child support payments regardless of where a parent resides. However, use of this procedure may be complicated if the absent parent files a joint return.

Federal Jurisdiction

Interstate child support cases may also be pursued through the federal courts in some circumstances, as outlined below.

Federal Diversity Jurisdiction

Federal district courts have original jurisdiction over all civil actions, including those involving child support, between residents of different states where the amount in controversy, exclusive of interests and cost, exceeds $10,000 (increases to $50,000, effective May 1989).[10] The absent parent must be properly notified, but the claim may be filed in the federal district court in any convenient state, which will determine which state's law to apply. Federal court orders are enforceable in every state. Federal courts, however, are backlogged and may take longer to handle a case than would a state court.

Limited Specific Federal Jurisdiction

HHS, through OCSE, is authorized to accept applications from states for permission to utilize federal courts to enforce an existing support order against an absent parent.[11] Such applications must be approved where OCSE finds that another state has not enforced the order of the originating state in a reasonable time,[12] and that recourse to the federal court is the only reasonable method of enforcing the order.

Where OCSE certifies such a case for federal litigation, it may be filed in the federal district court in which the claim arose or where either party

[8] 42 U.S.C. 664.

[9] 45 C.F.R. 303.7.

[10] 28 U.S.C. 1332 and P.L. 100-702.

[11] 42 U.S.C. 652(a)(8) and 660.

[12] OCSE has determined that 60 days is a reasonable time for states to undertake enforcement of an order from the applicant state. 45 C.F.R. 303.73.

resides.[13] This method may be used regardless of the amount in controversy, and as with federal diversity jurisdiction, any order issued is enforceable throughout the country.

[13]42 U.S.C. 660.

Resources Available to Locate Absent Parents

This appendix identifies various local, state, and federal resources available for locating absent parents.

Local Resources

Local efforts begin with information provided by the custodial parent. Depending on the working relationships the local child support office establishes with other local entities, it may obtain information from

- telephone and city directories;
- post offices;
- relatives, employers, friends, and business associates of the absent parent;
- the Chamber of Commerce and union locals;
- clinics and hospital admission records;
- banks, finance companies, and insurance companies;
- local police department, criminal, and court records;
- voter registration, tax assessor, and local welfare offices;
- utility companies; and
- churches.

State Resources

Either concurrent with the local search, or if the local search fails, the IV-D agency refers the case to the state parent locator service (SPLS). The SPLS is responsible for contacting

- state agencies, such as the departments of motor vehicles, employment security, corrections, and taxation;
- child support agencies in other states; and
- military central registries.

In addition, SPLS has authority for referring cases to the Federal Parent Locator System (FPLS).

Federal Resources

FPLS, operated by OCSE, is charged with providing, upon authorized request, the social security number, current address, and place of employment of an absent parent, if such information can be obtained from any files or records maintained by any state or federal agency. FPLS has access to information maintained by other federal agencies, such as the

- Social Security Administration,
- Internal Revenue Service,

- Department of Defense (which provides information from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration),
- Selective Service System,
- Veterans Administration, and
- General Services Administration (National Personnel Records Center).

Other Potential Resources

- INTERNET, funded by the Department of Labor, provides for quarterly cross-matches among state agencies in the unemployment compensation program.
- NLETS, a state funded and operated system, which ties together all states' police units, giving them access to states' department of motor vehicle data bases.
- Commercial data bases maintained by credit bureaus and telephone companies.

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